

Free thought

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED RATIONALIST MONTHLY

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH :

The world holds two classes of men—intelligent men without religion and religious men without intelligence.

ABU'L-ALA-AL-HA'ARRI

CONTENTS

BALLYHOO ABOUT PREDICTIONS
(DR) RAMAN'S INTELLECTUAL (DIS) HONESTY

ASTROLOGY—T. S. SELVARAJ □ THE ROOTS OF INDIA'S INTRAC-
TABLE PROBLEMS—PREMNATH BAZAZ □ ASTRONOMY AND
ASTROLOGY—DINESH NETTAR □ FAMILY PENSION FOR ASTRO-
LOGERS—P. K. NARAYANAN □ ASTROLOGY—FACT OR FICTION—
A. M. DHARMALINGAM □ KOVOOR EXPOSES ASTROLOGER RAMAN □
PREDICTIONS OF B. V. RAMAN WHICH NEVER HAPPENED

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God is a myth; immortality an illusion; Religion, a gigantic fraud

Letters

NOBODY PREDICTED ELECTION RESULTS!

Sir, May I draw your kind attention to my recent letter enquiring about the delay in receiving the Freethought magazine. I am missing so much of first hand news without Freethought and please send me all the previous numbers without delay.

Incidentally, I would like to point out a very important matter with regard to the recent general elections in India. It is really surprising to note that no Astrologer, Soothsayer or Seer could predict the outcome which was rather unexpected. Where were those pandits and great Astrologers like Prof. Raman? It is a shame they could not foresee an important incident taking place in their own country. May all the believers in Astrology open their eyes.

Certain Ceylonese astrologer in his famous almanac, failed to foresee the deaths of the Chairman and the Premier of China though he had pinpointed the death of a premier in another country which never came true. As to those deaths, they were ready with post mortem explanations! Clearly all pandits have cleverly avoided such a tricky

thing like elections. And this is not the first time they missed. No one could predict the very important historical event which affected the whole globe, the second world war!

May all pundits get together and destroy their moth eaten books.

Hemachandra B. Manamperi,
Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.

FREETHOUGHT

Sir, I have to congratulate you at the outset for the get up of "Freethought". The quality of the magazine has improved considerably in respect of print and spellings. The articles are thought-provoking and create general interest. Your service to the society by way of Marriage Bureau is also heartening and I hope people will take advantage of valuable services.

T. R. L. Chetty,
Bombay.

Sir, I am very pleased to see the improvement in the journal. I send you my congratulations for this.

Avula Sambasiva Rao,
Acting Chief Justice,
Hyderabad.

LUCRATIVE BUSINESS!

Do you want to make some easy and quick money in India? Here is a way. Advertise that you can predict whether a pregnant woman will give birth to a male or female child for a nominal charge of Rs. 5/-. You can even offer to refund the money if your prediction goes wrong! In a year or two, you too can make a lac or two!!

BALLYHOO ABOUT PREDICTIONS

It is a measure of human ignorance and gullibility that plain lies like astrology and palmistry are still being palmed off as devices for predicting future. If a lie is repeated too often and too vociferously, it may appear to listeners to be true. In fact this has been successfully used not only in religious indoctrination but also by trade and industry.

Vested interests have taken such deep roots that we should not be surprised if continuance of astrology is advocated as it employs a large number. Gainful employment indeed for a parasite and a cheat! They have associations and magazines and, what is more, professors and doctorates. Mr., nay, Dr. B. V. Raman of Bangalore tops them all. He has built an empire. So have many others.

It is just like Sai Baba. He himself is a nobody. But his promoters are cunning businessmen. Raman

himself may not know whether a celestial body is a planet or a star. But a 'reputation' is built up. The ballyhoo is kept up. People look askance at you if you do not know Raman or believe in his ability. When the bubble is pricked, Raman bursts into pieces. But who cares? He has made his pile and there are others to carry on the trade.

No science supports predictions (as against forecasts). No encyclopaedia states that there could be 'scientific' predictions. Millions of rupees are wasted on this humbug. People are deceived. Astrologers and palmists parade as 'professionals'. When the very basis is unreliable, why should not the Government, as a first step, license all those professing ability to predict and get their abilities tested by a committee so that the common man's time and money are not wasted. The astrologer is an economic and social offender.

(DR) RAMAN'S INTELLECTUAL (DIS) HONESTY

Instead of accepting Dr. Kovoov's challenge, he uses abusive language and attempts to throw doubt on the feasibility of paying a lac of rupees (page 10 of January 1977 issue of The Astrological Magazine). If he had questioned the methodology of the test or why it was not possible to state the sex or fact of death with 95% accuracy, it would have been considered scientific. Raman, instead, wantonly ignored Dr. Kovoov's offer

of November 1976 to waive the 1000-rupee deposit and other preliminaries. Dr Kovoov even offered to investigate in Raman's home-town at the latter's convenience. To establish his bonafides, Raman should have accepted the challenge even if, one lac was not offered. Why did Raman go into hiding? If this be the ability of the leader, what to talk of his tribe!

□

HAMID DALWAI PASSES AWAY

With deep sorrow we record the untimely demise of Hamid Dalwai, a fearless rationalist. In spite of being persecuted and maligned, he led the struggle against Burqua, Polygamy and Muslim Personal Law. His sudden demise at the age of 45 was mourned by, amongst others, Mr. Kamalashanker Pandya, Freedom Fighter, President of Gujarat Rationalist Association and a personal friend. Mr. Dalwai died a rationalist leaving instructions that no rites be performed.

FORTHCOMING ISSUES

Our July 1977 issue will be a Bible Special and that of August 1977, a Sankaracharya Special.

Please reserve your copies with your agents or send your subscription to us. Agency applications will be entertained for places where there are no agents.

ASTROLOGY

T. S. SELVARAJ

[The author is the founder-secretary of IRA. All the credit for improving the get-up, presentation and proof reading of our periodical goes to him. He is active as a Committee Member and his articles make very interesting reading—Ed.]

Astrology is one of the most widespread and oldest of all superstitions. More than 90% of the people of India, whether educated or uneducated, believe in Astrology.

THE ASTROLOGICAL TRIBE

The hold, the astrologer exercises on the people is stupendous: people go to him—as they would go to a doctor for medical treatment of physical ailments—for consultation on marriage alliances, racing tips (based on the horoscope of horses) stock exchange

speculations, fixing auspicious time for opening ceremonies and for varied other matters. Our roadsides are dotted with fortune tellers of all kinds: astrologers, palm-readers, numerologists, crystal gazers, those who read out ready-made cards picked



at random by trained parrots and others of the tribe. All these enjoy a large clientele and earn a good living. Newspapers and magazines make a good income from advertisements from astrologers and allied practitioners who have established houses of repute in fortune telling. Very often we read advertisements about some affluent touring astrologer or palm-reader staying in a posh hotel, consultation with whom will be only by prior appointment. Journals and dailies augment their sales by devoting columns for astrological information under such heads as "Know your fortune", "What the stars foretell", "This week for you", "Your birthday forecast" etc. All this because there is an innate curiosity in man to know his future and this weakness is exploited by the fortune-telling class.

DUBIOUS CREDIT

The predictions of astrologers are generally couched in vague language capable of more than one interpretation. Notwithstanding the dubious language, predictions often go wrong. But man's mind is psychologically prone to be impressed by predictions which have come true and overlook those which have gone wrong. As a consequence the astrologer thrives. When a prediction is proved correct, the astrologer claims all the credit for it; but when predictions are proved incorrect he takes shelter under the ingenious explanation that some error should have crept into the casting of the horoscope.

PLAYING THE TUNE

During World War II, all astrologers in the axis countries predicted the success of Hitler and Mussolini while those in the allied countries predicted the success of the allies. Are we to take it that only the astrologers of allied countries were genuine astrologers?

ABDICATION NOT PREDICTED

When the late King Edward VIII was born the Editor of the Sunday Despatch commissioned the services of a famous astrologer in Europe, one Maurice Privat, to cast the horoscope of the heir to the throne. The subject of the horoscope being a royal person, the astrologer would have taken every care to cast the horoscope correctly and predict accurately. He said several ordinary things about the prince such as would normally occur in the life of a royal person, but omitted to even remotely hint he would contract a morganatic marriage (with a commoner) and abdicate. Why was this not done by the astrologer? The answer

is very simple. Astrological predictions are largely by guess and certain rules of thumb, their fulfilment depending on pure chance. An event like abdication is something out of the ordinary in the history of British monarchy, and hence the "stars and planets" did not indicate this to the astrologer.

Instances can be multiplied but the above two samples will suffice to show how the trade is run.

BIRTH OF ASTRONOMY

In the ancient past astrology and astronomy were synonymous. The primitive man, impelled by necessity, studied the sun by daylight and the moon and stars by night. He watched the direction of the sun at its daily rising and setting, the length of shadows cast by the sun at midday, the various phases of the moon, the star groups and so on. And guided by his observations he recorded time, determined the length of the year, the onset and duration of the seasons, the time for sowing seeds and reaping harvests, and so on.

JUDICIAL ASTROLOGY

Astrology in the remote past had two branches: Natural astrology and judicial astrology. Natural astrology was concerned with the calculation of the movement of heavenly bodies while judicial astrology related to the study of the supposed influence of stars etc. on human life and destiny in a general way. Judicial astrology was a sort of omen prognostication. Predictions concerned the future of a country, its government, the conditions of coming harvest, pestilence, flood, storm, drought etc. Astrology was not used for casting horoscopes and predicting the fortunes of individual men.

HOROSCOPES APPEAR

It was only much later, in the 4th century B.C. that horoscopic astrology came to be developed by the Alexandrian School in Egypt under the influence of the Greeks. The flaw in this system is the arbitrary nature of the presuppositions, derived largely from a recollection of certain happenings accompanying certain phenomena in the past. Further the astrological theory is based on the theory of a geocentric universe in which the Sun, Moon and Planets revolved around the earth.

ASTRONOMY DISOWNS ASTROLOGY

But with the invention of telescope and the exploding of the geocentric theory by Copernicus early in the 17th century, astronomy began to develop independently as a science discarding astrology to the limbo of superstition. But the practitioners of astrology would not give up. They continued to assert that astrology was a science and earned their living by exploiting the credulity of man.

ZODIACAL SIGNS

The tools of the astrologer are mainly the 12 signs of the zodiac, the 9 planets and 27 stars.

The zodiac is a wide band of stars forming a complete circle round the sky in which the sun, moon and the planets move, the sun however, keeping very strictly to the middle of the band and travelling along an imaginary line called the ecliptic. This belt of stars is divided into 12 groups each of which was imagined as a figure, human or otherwise and given a name and a sign. In other words the 12 signs represented the 12 months of the year and the sun approximately spent one month against each. The signs of the zodiac are not physical bodies and hence they do not have any gravitational field.

They are only arbitrary divisions 30 degrees long.

MATCHING HOROSCOPES

The horoscope is cast taking into account the position of the planets at a given moment and location. First the Rasi or the sign of the zodiac is determined; then in which of the houses of the zodiac, the various planets have taken domicile at the time of birth and the governing star. Predictions are made based on a system of interpretation evolved at a time when the geocentric theory of the universe was in vogue. The signs of the zodiac are only artificial divisions. To endow them and the planets power over individual men is nothing but quackery. What is more ridiculous is that the planet and stars are regarded as divine powers, whose bad influences can be mitigated or eliminated by supplication and by the performance of certain prescribed rituals. The astrologer and priestly class have been making money from time immemorial by selling such false ideas to the common man, who is gullible enough to accept them and believe them to be true.

RAHU AND KETHU

The 9 planets include the sun and the moon—the latter, by the way, is not a planet but a satellite of the earth—and the imaginary Rahu and Kethu. These two are, according to mythology, snakes continuously chasing the sun and the moon and devouring them during an eclipse and then disgorging them. Every schoolboy knows how eclipses are caused, yet this fable is believed in and acted on by astrologers and those who believe in astrology. The newly discovered planets like Uranus, Neptune and Pluto have no place in astrology.

27 STARS

The 27 stars beginning with "aswani" are 27 stellar points along the ecliptic, each $13\frac{1}{3}$ degrees long. This is again a mere artificial division. Nevertheless the stars are believed to take an interest, each one in a different way, in the affairs of the humans inhabiting this small planet viz. earth.

WHY WIDOWS?

Almost all Hindu marriages take place only after the astrologer had examined the horoscopes of the would-be bride and bridegroom and proclaimed them compatible. If the astrologer declares that the horoscopes do not agree or that the husband will predecease the wife, even after a long time, the marriage proposal would be dropped, however eminently suitable the couple might be to each other. Notwithstanding this we find a large number of widows in the country. Will astrologers explain this anomaly?

INSURANCE COMPANIES CAN EMPLOY ASTROLOGERS?

If astrology were true, people can learn their lifespan from their horoscopes. There will be no need to write wills long before one's death. Life Insurance Companies can also learn about the longevity of their policy holders from their horoscopes instead of

doctors examining them and certifying their health.

The fact is the claim of astrology to be a science is false as it is diametrically opposed to the findings of science. If astrological predictions made now and again are collected and examined as to whether they have come true or not, the hollowness of the claim can easily be established.

BAN ASTROLOGY!

Nowhere else in the world, except in India, courses are offered in astrology by certain universities. We should represent that the student mind, instead of being moulded to develop scientific temper and reasoning should not be polluted by inculcation of this pseudo science.

In the Republic of Singapore the practice of fortune telling by quacks is forbidden by law. We should strive for bringing in a similar legislation in India banning fortune telling as a whole as it is nothing but quackery.

The task indeed is formidable, particularly in the context of the peculiar nature of Indian Secularism. Notwithstanding, we should continue to work and do our best to weed out this deep-rooted superstition from the minds of the people. ★

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THE ROOTS OF INDIA'S INTRACTABLE PROBLEMS

PREM NATH BAZAZ

After achievement of liberation from British Imperialism, India has, despite herculean attempts to make progress, passed through difficult periods, and is now beset with countless problems, some of them baffling indeed. Among the vexing ones are widespread poverty, mass unemployment, population explosion, colossal illiteracy, dismal ignorance, social backwardness and lack of self confidence among the people in general. Added to these are the power-hunger of opportunistic leadership of all political parties.

Sincere reformers and thoughtful men who have the good of the teeming, toiling millions at heart and want to find a way out of the present depressing situation, lay stress on one or the other of these problems and visualise the end of all in its solution. Rarely does any thinker point to the root from which India's degeneration grows and spreads.

Admitting that mistakes and even blunders have been committed from time to time in the past thirty years by the Government and its eminent leaders, no small efforts have been made to ameliorate the lot of suffering masses in different spheres of economic and social life. But the endeavours have failed to bear the desired fruit and, as statistics show, the conditions in different segments have deteriorated deepening miseries and adding to hardships of the people.

BASIC PROBLEM

The truth is that the politicians who guide the destinies of 620 million Indians are either unable to comprehend the basic problem of the country or if they have at all an inkling of it, they are afraid to tackle it lest by doing so the people are antagonized.

Our basic problem is the religious mode of thinking which is prevalent in all parts of India and among all classes, castes and communities of people. Progress in education, science, technology and industrialization made but very small dents in the medieval outlook of Indians, both literate and illiterate. Their approach to life has not undergone any drastic change and is today the same as it was two thousand years ago. We repose faith in supernatural force which shapes our destiny; we believe that whatever takes place is god-ordained.

INEQUALITY AT BIRTH

Whatever the claims of uncritical lovers of ancient culture, the structure of Indian society is founded on inequality; the people are divided into high and low castes from the Vedic times to the present day. A person is born in a particular caste and inherits the advantages or disadvantages attached to it from hoary past. There is no way out and the burden has to be borne to the end of one's life. No political or social revolution has been effective enough to change the caste system which thrives even in the twentieth century as it did under the rule of the undeservedly praised Guptas who revived Brahminism after the decadence and ultimate fall of Buddhist egalitarian philosophy.

KARMA AND SUBMISSION

The karma theory is a handy argument to silence any Indian into humble submission; he meekly accepts without murmur any good or bad that befalls him. This attitude has incapacitated him to understand that every event in individual and social life is not mysterious but has a discoverable cause. The karma theory is mental panacea for an Indian irrespective of his being a tribal or a sophisticated urbanite; it strengthens him to endure misfortunes and miseries on the ground that they are an outcome of his supposed previous births; it emasculates and prevents him from fighting against adverse conditions of living.

INCARNATION AND DEPENDENCE

Another theory commonly held is that an avatar (incarnation of God) appears on earth to save humanity from evil and restore

good in society; it has done incalculable harm to the growth of sense of self-reliance among the Indians. Indeed, it has been the main cause why our country was conquered by one adventurer after another from outside, has remained under foreign domination and was easily and comfortably ruled by despots and tyrants for many long centuries. Our forefathers believed that the Almighty willed it so and we could have no say or choice in these changes of far reaching consequences; the rulers both alien and indigenous, were manifestations of the divinity.

ELUSIVE RENAISSANCE

On reflection, any impartial analyst will not fail to see that directly or indirectly the various problems confronting India are the product of the mental outlook that Indians have adopted from immemorial times and are not prepared to abandon even when science has destroyed our innumerable myths and conquered outer space and the moon where we supposed soul to travel only after death.

Under impact of the New Learning introduced by the British in the nineteenth century signs of enlightenment became visible and there was loud talk of Indian renaissance but it proved still-born as the reactionary, religion-ridden leaders captured the Nationalist Movement and reinforced the doctrines and practices of Brahminism. Independence gave an impetus to it and multiplied our problems which have become intractable. We refuse to recognise the root and are inevitably and inexorably proceeding toward the doom.

LEADERS' ESCAPISM

Until and unless the religious mode of thinking is revolutionalized and rational way of thought inculcated, India's numerous ills will resist destruction because their roots lie in it. Unhappily the leaders who are at the helm of affairs and should have undertaken the task of eradicating the root are giving the least attention to it, either because its gravity has never crossed their minds or if anyone among them realizes it he is not prepared to publicly declare it due to the fear that it will arouse stiff opposition, jeopardising his reputation and high position in the populace.

The popularity-seeking leaders have therefore found escape in formulating a philosophy of so-called spirituality: the dismal ignorance of the Indian millions is glorified as greatness of soul and profundity of thought which is peculiar gift possessed by only the Indians and needs to be emulated by other nations of the world, particularly in the west which has taken long strides in material advancement.

ANCIENT WISDOM OR IGNORANCE!

Day in and day out high-sounding sermons are profusely given in this country on the superiority of ancient Indian culture. It is stressed that while the old cultures of other nations like Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Persians and others which witnessed pinnacles of glory in antiquity, have vanished, the Vedic culture has survived because it carries abiding values of spirituality which have not been overwhelmed by material progress. This philosophy evades realism, is meaningless and is an outcome of inferiority complex.

If world History is any guide, it is crystal-clear that the primitive religious thinking of which we are so boastful, has been a cherished possession in the past of the races now ahead of us in worldly progress; they discarded it when it obstructed their march onwards to the goal of spiritual and material liberation of man. So the Indian commodity is nothing new for progressive nations and they will not be inclined to touch it with even a pair of tongs, much less own it partly or wholly.

THE INDIAN CONTRADICTION

It may also be noted that despite the professed contempt for the scientific culture, Indian leaders are eager to spread science and technology as rapidly as they can forgetting their own vehement discourses on the superiority of primitive Vedic culture. Even the most orthodox and conservative Indian is willy nilly being influenced by modernity in one or more ways. He cannot help using gadgets which are taboo by scriptural doctrines. We have established scientific institutions, laboratories and research centres in different parts of the country. We are hurrying industrialisation on a big scale both in public and private sector all the while paying glowing tributes to Gandhism which is opposed to these aims. Thus, we are successful only in neutralising one of our efforts by another; it gives rise to manifold problems which have retarded progress of our vast country and its hapless millions.

AGE OF RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

Blind and implicit faith in a religion and its dogmas, usages and rites which may have served human needs thousands of years ago but have become chains of slavery today, is

making Indians easy victims of cheats, swindlers, humbugs who pose as godmen and have been multiplying in number year after year since 1947 which opened the golden age of religious revival.

In these circumstances the historic task of an Indian rationalist is of tremendous immensity. Out of our huge population of 620 million not more than 30 percent is literate which includes in good measure university educated and highly qualified sections. But whether literate or illiterate, Indians are intellectually and spiritually in the same category. All are admirers of the backward-looking philosophy and soul-killing customs, traditions, ceremonies and superstitions which are the manifestations of the ancient culture. Very few Indians have liberated themselves from these shackles. From womb to funeral pyre they are to follow the instructions of the brahmin priest and cannot make a move without consulting the family astrologer.

INTELLECTUAL COWARDS

Intellectuals, that is those persons whose minds are really emancipated and can think in a revolutionary manner, are conspicuous by their absence in Indian society. Surrounded by men and women known for being wise, educated and intelligent but who submissively follow the traditions and uphold the beliefs known to be pernicious, a struggling rationalist either loses courage to firmly stand by himself or, in course of time, joins the multitude of intellectual cowards, which guarantees life of ease and comfort. But if the rationalist has the hardihood to be bold enough to persist in developing his indepen-

dent thought defying society, he has to endure unceasing obloquy and live in obscurity, ostracised by fellow countrymen.

RATIONALIST REVOLUTIONARIES

It is, however, such men of moral stature (though beneath dignity in the eyes of so called educated classes and ignorant multitudes), who lift humanity from low level to a higher plane of civilization. They are the salt of the earth and the gems of humankind. It is such rationalist intellectuals who have by their sacrifices built up human society into what it is today not only mentally and spiritually but also materially and morally. India is passing through a crucial period of its history. The perspective appears to be dismal and fraught with grave consequences. We need more and more of rationalist revolutionaries to let the country come into its own. Left to the popular leaders it may go to pieces as it did at the fall of the Mughal Empire.



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ASTRONOMY AND ASTROLOGY

Mr. DINESH NETTAR

Mr. Dinesh Nettar, M.Sc., is a research scholar at I.I.T., Madras. Though quite young, he is a very enthusiastic rationalist and a member of the managing committee of I.R.A.—Ed.

Astronomy, which is generally considered a branch of mathematics deals with celestial bodies like the sun, the moon, the planets, the stars, the galaxies and so on. When it began about 5000 years ago, people simply observed the appearance of the sky night after night for weeks, months and years. They observed some regularity in their appearance and drew up formulae for predicting the sky in future. The formulae were improved upon by later astronomers and more precise formulae derived. Now,



of course, modern telescopes are used for very precise observation. Theoretical justification for what was once only an observation came from the Newton's law of universal gravitation and later improved by Einstein's theory of relativity.

Let me elaborate a little here. We now know that the earth goes round the sun in an elliptic orbit with the sun at one of the foci.

We must remember that it is possible to calculate the apparent movement of sun as observed from earth, using the same mathematics. Therefore early astronomers, not knowing that the earth went round the sun, did well to derive some formulae for the movement of the sun. One of the important drawbacks in this old theory was the apparent retrograde motion of the planets.

ASTROPHYSICS

Astrophysics is an offshoot of astronomy. It deals with the physics of the celestial bodies. Astrophysicists measure the intensity and the spectral distribution of light coming from the stars, radio waves coming from stars

that may not be visible. Stars of variable intensities, their moving away from or towards earth at very high velocities and so on. Thus they have observed 'birth, growth and death' of stars and are able to formulate theories about what will happen to our own solar system millions of years hence.

The method, however, does not attribute any special characteristic like good or evil nature to any celestial body. It never says, "watch out, if you look at Neptune for too long, your brother will catch cold" or something like that.

ASTROLOGY BEGINS

Astrology, to begin with, about 5000 years ago, used the same methods. But there it stopped. Somebody could not explain why the king was having stomachache, so he said Saturn caused it. From then on, everybody started cursing Saturn. Similarly, without trying to find out earthly causes by a careful investigation, all incidents, 'miracles' and calamities were attributed to these celestial bodies. What is certainly painful is that even now people believe in such mumbo-jumbo.

12 MONTHS

The division of year into 12 months is perhaps because of the observation that the new moon appears 12 times a year (in 360 days to be more precise). This was extended a bit too far and the sky along the ecliptic, that is, the plane in which the earth goes round the sun was imagined to form a picture like the ram or the bull, and these are the 12 signs of the zodiac. It cannot be denied, however, that you might as well imagine an elephant instead of the balance or a book in the place

of gemini. That is trivial. The moving stars or planets observed against this background assumed to be on a sphere, devoid of depth.

I should mention that the retrograde motion is very much a part of astrology though Copernicus was wise enough to leave it out. The relative configuration of the sky at the time of one's birth includes the sun as a planet, the moon also a planet, and Rahu and Ketu, fictitious so far as astronomy is concerned, but leaves out Uranus Neptune and Pluto, the known remaining planets of the solar system. This, as you can clearly see, was the picture 5000 years ago, and has not been updated.

PLANETS' GRAVITY

Educated people always come up with some explanation if they are believers. One of these is that we cannot rule out that the planets do influence us by their gravity. This is true, and some influence like the moon's gravitation causes the tides. But at the same time, the influence is the same on all the people and the planet does not single out people for its good 'gravitational' effect or bad 'gravitational effect'. Then again, since the farther planets move very slowly with respect to earth, the influence also should change very slowly. But you will see that the horoscopes of people born only minutes apart will be miles apart.

Even if we calculate the difference in this influence on two humans separated by 20,000 km., it will be so small that strictly by this rule, if one gets 80 marks in his exam, the other must get 79.9999 and not 36 or 98! The influence also does not depend on the

mass of the planet, does not depend on its density, its inclination to the ecliptic, its eccentricity (by way of departure from a circular orbit around the sun) and so on. The influence of the satellites of jupiter, 12 of them, and some of them as big as planets, is zero. The stars, millions of times larger than the planets are not effective either. Strange indeed are these influences!

IS ASTROLOGY STATISTICAL?

Some people would like to call it a statistical subject. That is, according to them, thousands of horoscopes were compared with the lives of men to whom they belonged and some generalisations made. Such methods are strangers to astronomy which does not need any statistics. The astrologers do not make available these thousands of horoscopes to you so that you can verify the observations. In addition, according to statistics, these thousands must be picked at random and not with a bias. Astrologers pick only those horoscopes that support their theory and all those which do not are ignored. I would like to know what statistics this is. If I am allowed to pick a thousand horoscopes at random, I wonder how much of such a pattern I would find. Also, happily are ignored thousands of other more important aspects that may be responsible for the course of events.

CELESTIAL INTELLIGENCE?

Quantitativeness is an essential feature of mathematical sciences. Mere quality is tolerated for a short period, but a true science gives also the quantitative nature of an observation. You might have seen the photograph of the plaque sent aboard Pioneer II, which

carries the pulsing pattern of 14 pulsars to indicate the relative position of our solar system in the galaxy, so that celestial intelligence, if any can identify them by this measurement.

VELOCITY OF LIGHT

The relative positions of the planets and stars at any time like the time of birth are only apparent. By simple geometry astronomers can calculate the distances of different stars and planets. They know from physics that light travels only at 300,000 km/hr and not instantaneously. So, the sun as we see is actually as it was 8 minutes ago and the pole star, 400 years ago. Some of the stars that we see now emitted their light millions of years ago and may not necessarily exist now. But still, they are included in astrological theories, because they know only of the depthless sky. When you say that Mars is in Gemini, it makes no sense. Since Mars was there some minutes ago, but the different stars of Gemini were there at different times.

The apparent positions are deceptive. Since in three dimensions, a constellation will look entirely different from different angles in space, such things as Jupiter in Leo are meaningless. Whereas astronomy can predict exactly what Leo looks like from the Star Sirius by projection geometry calculations what would a poor astrologer do when his Jupiter can never appear against Leo? Stars outside the $23\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ belt of the ecliptic, like those in Ursa Major, Southern Cross are insignificant in astrology, just because they do not appear convenient from here.

(Continued on page 142)

FAMILY PENSION FOR ASTROLOGERS

P. K. NARAYANAN

[Mr. P. K. Narayanan is one of IRA's Vice Presidents and Advisor to Nagpur Rationalist Association—Ed.]

A news item monitored by Samachar and reported by all the National Papers, reads as follows :

Ujjain, March 16.

The State Government has sanctioned life long pension of Rupees four hundred per month to Mrs. Jailaxmi Vyas, widow of late Pandit Suryanarayan Vyas, a noted astrologer, according to an official release.

This news item presents a very shocking reading. The Family Pension granted from the resources of the State to the widow in the instant case is no doubt for the services rendered by her late husband as an astrologer ! Further, instead of simply allowing the pension and be done with it, the State Government interestingly enough issued a special release signifying the importance of the event.

WHITHER SCIENTIFIC TEMPER ?

Besides keeping the people superstitious, astrology also leads the masses to rely more on stars and planets than their own body, mind and the world around. The predictions also keep them introverts, idle and unproductive. In a country where one of the fundamental duties of the citizen is to "develop the scientific temper, humanism and spirit of enquiry and reform" the gesture of the State Government in allowing the family pension

of Rs. 400 to the widow of the late astrologer really is not in keeping with the spirit of the time. The Family Pension payable in the case of a deceased Government or a Military Personnel never exceeds Rs. 150. The people have therefore a right to know for what valuable service rendered by the astrologer the family pension of Rs. 400 p.m. has been granted ?

WHAT CONSIDERATION ?

Is it granted as a mark of appreciation of his astrological predictions which saved the people from poverty, diseases, calamities et al., or is it as a humanitarian consideration for ameliorating the difficulties of a destitute widow ? If the latter is the case, are there no other destitutes in the length and breadth of the State, who are in poorer and more pathetic conditions deserving family pensions ? The answer is obvious. Most men who lead the Governments are in the hands of astrologers, palmists, yogis, gurus and other cultists.

It is high time that all those who are interested in the future and the progress of the country took up seriously the task of inculcating in the people an awareness for changing their traditional attitudes towards superstitious pursuits of astrology, palmistry et al.



ASTROLOGY- FACT OR FICTION

Prof. A. M. DHARMALINGAM

[The author, a founder member of IRA, is Professor of Law in Bangalore university and President of the Karnataka Rationalist Association. He is one of the members of the committee appointed by Bangalore University to investigate miracles and other verifiable superstitions. —Ed].

A reference to a number of encyclopedias in the English language discloses the fact that none of them regard Astrology as a Science. At best some of them describe it as a Pseudo science. Obviously for this reason there is no University in the world which teaches astrology as a subject. It is a big credit (!) for superstitious India that there is a college for astrology in Bombay where pupils are trained to cast horoscopes

forecast events and prescribe antidotes for the ill effects of the stars and planets on the lives of human beings and also for functions like laying foundation stones for houses, factories, offices etc. The majority of the Scientists have never taken seriously to the study of astrology.

ORIGIN

Astrology started in ancient Babylonia whose people studied the heavens for centuries and have given the world our week days, our months in a year and other astronomical foundations. With their eyes, they discovered the existence of luminous planets going around the sun and distinguished them as opposed to the twinkling stars. They named the seven week days after these seven heavenly bodies and also discovered the recurring seasons which happen once a year. The city of Babylonia was flooded with astrologers who made a lively living by this trade. They foretold the future of their customers, fixed the good and auspicious days for their social functions and also

AIRCRAASH AND PREDICTION

Take a case like an airplane crash. You hear someone applauding the astrologer who warned him not to board the plane and thus saved him. On the basis of the same argument, the astrologers of the remaining passengers must be nuts. Also, this 'very great successful' astrologer does not tell how on 9999 occasions before he predicted accidents to his clients which never took place. It is nice indeed to avoid evidence against oneself!

prescribed remedies for imagined evils caused by the position of the planets at a given time, namely, time of birth, time of marriage, time of death and so on. This art of astrology travelled from Babylonia to Egypt, Greece, Rome and India. The discoveries of the heavenly bodies made by Babylonians were not complete but yet astrology is based on the known facts of the then Babylonia.

MISSING LINKS

Beyond Saturn the huge planets, Neptune and Uranus, were later discovered by European astronomers. Still later by the middle of the 19th century, the farthest planet of Pluto was discovered in our solar system. About the same time were discovered the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. The huge distance between these two planets made Astronomers suspect a missing planet and their close observation finally yielded to them the existence of the thousands of small planets going around the sun between

Mars and Jupiter. The planets in this asteroid system are varying in diameter from half a mile to 500 and odd miles.

Granting that planets and the stars have some effect on the fortune of things on the earth—organic and inorganic—it can only be wrong because not all the heavenly bodies are taken into consideration. The two planets of Mars and Saturn are given bad names only because they look different from the others, Mars being a little reddish and Saturn having a ring around it.

SIGNS OF ZODIAC

Our astrologers are taking into consideration only 27 stars while in fact there are millions of them in the heavens. It is not also made clear that all the stars in one segment of the Zodiac are taken as one star. The ancient astronomers were never aware of the huge distances of the star from the earth. While it takes about 8 minutes for light to come from the sun to the earth, a

(Continued from page 139)

ASTRONOMY vs. ASTROLOGY

What really baffles a man is the jargon of words used by an astrologer. Both of them use some words in common, both of them write down formulae and multiply, divide, and so on and get some answers. An astronomer can reason out his calculations and give theoretical explanation supported by observation. But an astrologer makes assumptions that can be justified only by his inten-

tion to make money. There are more parameters in his theory than observables.

An astronomer can predict the future appearance of planets, eclipses and so on. An astrologer uses the astronomer's methods to do the same and then extrapolates it to influences and so on. The success of an astrologer in predicting eclipses may surprise a layman, but it should hardly be so, since it is easier than calculating the best method of changing traffic lights in Mount Road.



LONGEVITY AND PREDICTIONS

The 1931 census discloses that the average life span of the Indian was 23 years. Today the expectation of life is computed at 54 years and promises to rise to about 70 in a few decades as is the case in the Western countries today. In a span of hardly half a century, the average life span of the Indian has more than doubled. Is this phenomenal change due to any radical changes in the behavioural pattern of the planets? Can anyone imagine that the planets in 50 years' time have become either big or small, heavier or lighter, brighter or dimmer, further or nearer? We know that the increase in the average life of the Indian can only be due to better health and sanitary conditions. The Indian has also begun to eat better and to live better.

distance of about 93 million miles, it is stated by the astronomers that it takes about $4\frac{1}{2}$ light years for a ray of light to come to the earth from the nearest star. What effect the stars at that distance could have on the living beings of the earth is hardly imaginable.

Ancient astronomy, it must be noted was based on Geocentric system, that is, the earth regarded as the centre of the universe with the moon, planets, sun and stars, all going around the earth, the earth itself being a flat one fixed in space. It was only after

the discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo that astronomy changed over to the heliocentric system, under which the sun is regarded as a centre of the solar system with the earth and the other planets orbiting around the sun. For long, the astronomers also did not know that the orbit of the planets was not a circle but an ellipse.

SUN SPOTS

The existence and the variation of the sun spots in the surface of the sun was only recently discovered. The sun's spots are so huge that all the planets can be swallowed by one small sun spot. The temperature at the sun spot is cooler than at others. The sun being a body that revolves on its own axis besides moving in the galaxy, produces sun spots at varying times. A number of happenings on the earth like storms, earthquakes, atmospheric disturbances that are not seasonal are now being attributed either to the sun spot or the terrific flares on the surface of the sun.

Regardless of all the above modern discoveries in astronomy, our astrologers have been going on ancient foundations. Let us suppose that a medicine prescribed by a doctor with a dozen ingredients is actually delivered to the patient with only half of it, it would be clear that the effect would not be what is expected of the medicine on the patient. Similarly astrology based on inadequate knowledge of the planets can only be equal to the above type of medicine. For these reasons it can be asserted that astrology which is mostly used for casting horoscopes and fixing good and bad days can only be fictitious and misleading.

PRESCRIPTIONS

The most peculiar part of astrology is the prescription easily given by the astrologers to overcome or defeat the malignant effect of the planets. Worship of a god, performance of some rituals, feeding the poor or benefiting the priests are all that is prescribed. On the face of it this appears to be absurd and meant only to fool and exploit the gullible and make money in the process.

There have been pleas by astrologers in this country for the constitution of a portfolio for astrology in the Ministry or the

appointment of an official astrologer to the Government as was perhaps the case in ancient times when Hindu kings did nothing without consulting the astrologers. Fortunately the scientific advance and the rationalist attitude have progressed so much that no civilized Government ever agreed to this superstition though it is a fact that ministers and high Government officers do consult the astrologer on the sly whenever an important function is arranged. If even this private, unofficial importance that is being given to a superstition is to go, rationalist propaganda should become widespread and effective.



COMETS AND CALAMITIES

So much of blame has been heaped on them for bringing calamities. If we examine this belief, we realise that every year comets appear, but only those that are large and can be easily seen are reported by astronomers, and this does not happen every year. Calamities, however, happen very frequently, more than once a year to different degrees. If no calamity occurred during the year when a comet appeared, somebody would say that the calamity was that his uncle who died would have been a great statesman and so a calamity is imagined to fit the theory! Comets behave so differently that they escape the astrologer's formulas and are surprises for him. But for an astronomer, his telescope tells otherwise and he can know about its orbit round the sun and calculate the time of its next appearance.

KOVOOR EXPOSES ASTROLOGER RAMAN



Mr. B. V. Raman, India's internationally known astrologer, failed to accept a challenge issued to him from public platforms by Dr. Abraham T. Kovoor. Of 63 meetings addressed by Dr. Kovoor, 8 were in Dr. Raman's own home state, Karnataka. Dr. Kovoor had also written to Dr. Raman while he was in Bangalore asking him to attend any one of his meetings so that a test could be conducted in public. At each meeting Dr. Kovoor asked Dr. Raman to step forward if he was in the audience "but he never came". Dr. Kovoor said he had then read out many published predictions of Raman which never came true.*

In a letter to "The Sunday Times", Dr. Kovoor wrote:

A wrong concept will never become right either by majority opinions or even by winning a debate. Verification through

* See back cover.

scientific tests is the correct method for establishing the factuality of a thing. It is unscientific to try to establish the validity of astrology by conducting parallel tests on any other discipline like psychiatry or organ transplantation.

I can convince people that astrology and palmistry are pure gambles if astrologers and palmists can attend any of the monthly meetings of the Sri Lanka Rationalist Association. They, along with an equal number of laymen selected at random from the audience, will be asked to identify the males and females, the dead and the living, from a set of ten astrological charts giving the exact dates and times of birth correct to the minute of ten persons, together with the latitudes and longitudes of the places of their birth.

To palmists, I shall give palm prints of both hands of ten persons, duly attested by a responsible police officer. On comparing

their answers with the correct ones in a sealed cover, the professionals themselves will be surprised to see that their scores are not in any way better than those of the laymen. All the scores will be in the neighbourhood of 50 per cent. Any fool can get that score! In experiments I have conducted in the past, I have found in some cases the scores of the laymen better than those of the so-called professors!

Of course, if a 'professor' can get 95 per cent correct answers, he will be entitled

to the award of Rs. 1,00,000 which I have offered in my permanent challenge to claimants of psychic, parapsychic and occult powers.

Like all astrologers Raman too makes his predictions by intelligent guessing. Although he earns more money than other Indian astrologers through his widely-read magazine he seems to be not so intelligent like other astrologers in the art of guessing. Even a fool could have had one or two correct 'hits' in the numerous predictions.



TIME OF BIRTH

The astrologers often say that unless the time of birth is accurately recorded, exact predictions are impossible. They are not however sure of what is "time of birth".

Is it the time at which the entire baby comes out of the vagina, as followed by the Doctors and the Registrars of birth? Or is it the time of appearance of head or severance of cord? Or, is it the time of the fertilisation of the female ovum by male sperm?

Most astrologers treat the time of visibility of the head of the baby or the time of the first cry of the baby as the time of birth which of course does not stand to reason.

Medical science tells us that birth can be artificially advanced or postponed. In a caesarian operation, the doctor determines the time of birth. A genuine believer can calculate the horoscopes for his child if it were born at different places and at different times (within a certain limit) and choose the best conditions to get a great offspring!

HOLY COWS AND SIMPLE PEOPLE

The cow is used for a variety of purposes, among them telling the future. The owner of the cow asks the animal questions about his client's fortune. The number of times the cow nods its head is supposed to be significant.

News and Notes

STUDY COURSE ON RATIONALISM

A Study Course on Rationalism was organised under the auspices of Indian Rationalist Association at Madras on 13th, 14th and 15th May, 1977. The Course was attended by mostly Members of Indian Rationalist Association from the city as well as from outstations.

Mr. Justice Mohan, who inaugurated the Course emphasized the need to practise Rationalism in their private lives. He highlighted that fear is mainly responsible for most superstitions and hence man must overcome fear of any sort.

The faculty Members at the Course were :

1. Mr S. L. Bharati, 2. Mr. Dinesh Nettar, 3. Dr. C. G. Pande, 4. Dr. T. Jayavelu, 5. B. S. Dixit, 6. Prof. A. M. Dharmalingam, 7. Mr. Peter Sam, 8. Mr. N. Ram, 9. Mr. T. S. Selvaraj.

Mr. C. A. Seshadri, Editor of FREE-THOUGHT was the Course-in-charge.

It may be noted here that all the faculty members as also the organizers were thoroughly satisfied with the results of the Course and it has been decided to make it a regular feature in future.

The hand-outs on different subjects distributed at the Course are available for sale at Rs. 3/per set.

ROURKELA RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION

At the Annual General Body Meeting of Rational Thinkers' Forum held on 27-3-77 at the Rourkela, the name of the Association has been changed to Rourkela Rationalist Association. It has also been decided to continue its affiliation to Indian Rationalist Association. At the Meeting office Bearers were elected for the year 1977-78 with Mr. R.

Raman as President and Mr. P. N. P. Appan as secretary.

KERALA RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION

A Reception Committee for the conduct of NORTHERN REGIONAL RATIONALIST STUDY CAMP was constituted at Perambra on 24-4-77. Seven persons were elected as Office Bearers under the presidentship of Mr. C. Kutty Krishnan.

Mr. M. B. K., Vice President, Kerala Rationalist Association is elected as the Director of the Camp.

The camp will be inaugurated at 11 a.m. on 11-6-77 by Dr. P. V. Velayudham Pillai, President, Kerala Rationalist Association.

Classes will be taken by eminent rationalists on :

1. Universe—origin and development—concept of science and religion.
2. Origin of life—scientific and religious views.
3. Religion—Historical Study
4. Rationalism—Historical Study
5. Pseudosciences, E. S. P., Psycho-Kinesis, Transcendental meditation etc.
6. Rationalism in Practical life.

A major show on Magic & Hypnotism will be conducted on 9-6-77 by Prof. R. K. Malayath and party.

A public meeting is also arranged as the concluding part of the Study Camp on 12-6-1977 at 6-30 p.m.

U. Kalanathan, General Secretary,
K.R.A., Kadalakundi

Predictions of B. V. Raman which never happened

1. The United Nations will come to an end in 1965
2. Pakistan will cease to exist by 1965
3. In July 1963 Salazar of Portugal will be removed from Office.
4. Mrs. Indira Gandhi is likely to get displaced on reason of ill-health or accident. But she should stage a come back in 1970.
5. Nationalisation of Banks in India will not come through
6. Sanjeeva Reddi will win the presidential election
7. Mrs. Indira Gandhi's reign will end soon.
8. During the total solar eclipse on September 22, 1969 the following things will happen in India :
 - (a) There will be great sufferings and losses for pregnant women, poets and musicians in Bengal and neighbouring places.
 - (b) India will lose one of its greatest politicians and musicians.
 - (c) Two prominent newspapers of India will face prosecutions.
 - (d) Pakistan will repeat what she did to India in 1965.
9. President Ford will be re-elected as President !

NOTE :

Predictions 1 to 3 were made in 1963 and 4 to 8 for the year 1969.